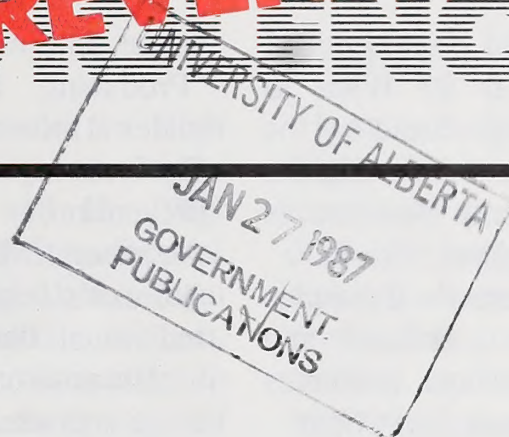


FOCUS

FAMILY PREVENTION



Volume 1, Number 3

Winter 1986

Children of Abused Mothers

Interest and concern for the children of abused women is increasing as practitioners and researchers alike are recognizing the detrimental effects that living in violent homes has on such children. Some studies are showing that many children accompanying their abused mothers to emergency shelters have also been abused. One such study was conducted in Edmonton in 1985. WIN House, a women's emergency shelter, conducted a comprehensive assessment of 336 children who spent time at the shelter over a nine-month period. Their assessments indicated that the problems of the children were both more severe and more extensive than had been initially expected. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the children, three to eighteen years old, were found to have been physically, sexually, emotionally abused and/or neglected; many of them had been subjected to more than one type of abuse. For example, 67% of the children who had been sexually abused had been physically and emotionally abused as well.*

Other studies concentrating on assessing the impact of children witnessing the abuse of their mothers, without necessarily having been abused directly themselves, are revealing damaging effects as well. The effects are being manifested by symptoms of psychological trauma, developmental delays and dysfunctional learning. General symptoms such as high levels

of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, verbal, cognitive and motor delays, as well as sleep disturbances, learning problems and various health problems have all been displayed by children of abused women. Several studies have noted that some effects are gender related. In particular, many of the girls had become withdrawn; whereas many of the boys were very aggressive. This latter manifestation is an indication of the kind of learning that is taking place in such homes. There is evidence that children are learning such principles as: love and violence go together; anger and violence are inseparable; violence is a preferred, or the only, method of resolving conflicts or maintaining control over others.

Because the acknowledgement of the damaging effects of wife abuse on children is so new, effective approaches directed at helping them are still being developed.

A review of services being offered across Canada was recently undertaken by the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence. The study found that several different approaches are being tried.† Individual, group and family therapy are used to help children overcome psychological trauma. To unlearn dysfunctional beliefs and behaviors, methods based on social learning and cognitive restructuring theories are being used. It is too soon to know how well any of these methods

are working. The WIN House study determined that 70% of the abused children they identified displayed behavioral and emotional problems severe enough to require referral to treatment agencies. It is therefore important to develop effective programs for these troubled children; children such as Kathy, age 9, who said:

"I get in trouble (at school) because I have a hitting problem. When I get mad I just hit. I'm trying to stop but it's too hard."

"I don't want anybody to like me. I want to be alone. I want to run away. I think about it all the time."

"These things are my fault."

(Quoted in Report of WIN House Study, p. 33)

* Copies of the study are available from WIN House.

† For paper Children of Domestic Violence: Programs and Treatment, write to: The Office for the Prevention of Family Violence.

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"HELP": Abused Women

A new pamphlet and poster entitled *Wife Abuse: What is it? What to do About It!*, jointly produced by the Women's Secretariat and the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence, is being circulated throughout Alberta.

The pamphlet explains the dynamics of wife abuse and its effects and discusses the options and resources available to abused women in Alberta.

The issue of wife abuse is one of continuing concern to the Government of Alberta. "It is important that women and the public are aware of the serious nature of the problem and that safety and emergency care are available to women in need," said Mrs. Osterman,

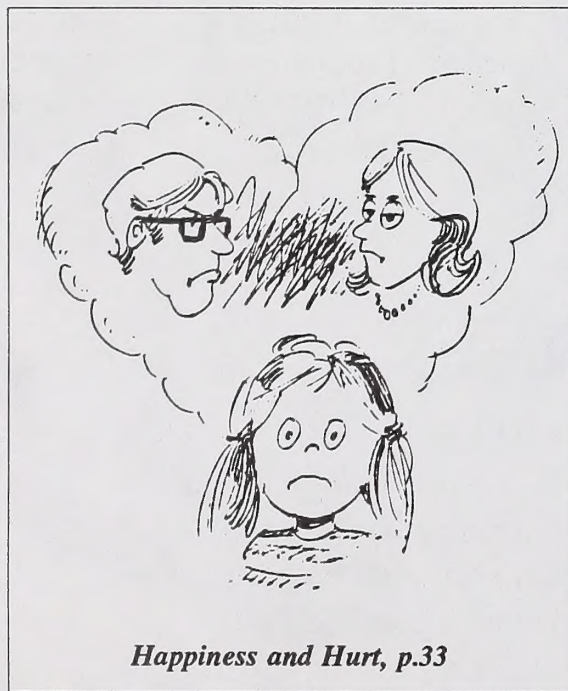
at the time of the pamphlet's release. "Producing this public education material reflects the commitment of the Government to promote family violence prevention," stated Mr. Dennis Anderson, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues. "We believe that all individuals have a right to live in a non-violent environment and to know where to go and what to do if they are living in abusive situations."

Thanks to the support and assistance of many agency boards and professional associations, the pamphlet is widely available across the province. For copies, write to "HELP", Box 866, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 2L8.



Did You Know?

- Calgary's YWCA Sheriff King Home, a women's emergency shelter, has published a book to help children living in abusive families, identify and clarify their feelings and examine some other issues related to their situations. The book, in the form of a manual for children to write in and colour is called *Happiness and Hurt: A Personal Diary for Children, Ages 5 to 9*, available for \$4 from Calgary YWCA.



Happiness and Hurt, p.33

- The federal government is urging immigration officials to be lenient on immigrants without landed status who lose the sponsorship of their spouse because of marriage breakdown. Battered and pregnant women are of particular concern. Humanitarian and compassionate guidelines are to be considered for such cases.

- The province-wide crisis line operated by the *Manitoba Committee on Wife Abuse* responded to 2,345 calls during 1985, compared with 1,832 calls the previous year.

- The I.O.D.E. provided funds which enabled child care workers in women's emergency shelters to attend a training workshop in November conducted by Dr. Mary Scanlon, consulting psychologist and author of *Children in Domestic Violence: Report for WIN House*. The workshop focused on understanding experiences and problems of children in violent families, identifying abuse and neglect, and making referrals.

- The City of Lethbridge declared November *anti-Family Violence month*.

- Participants attending the October 30 meeting of *Albertans for Crime Prevention* displayed a keen interest in a panel discussion on child abuse. Katrine McKenzie, Director, Office for the Prevention of Family Violence moderated the panel consisting of Marilyn McLean (Catalyst Theatre, Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Program), Detective Wayne Rhyason (Edmonton City Police Child Abuse Unit) and Richard Ouellette (Alberta Social Services Casework Supervisor).

- *Dr. Murray Straus*, renowned researcher and author in the field of family violence, from the University of New Hampshire, will be a guest speaker in Edmonton, February 14, 1987 at a public forum. Dr. Straus's visit will be jointly sponsored by the Centre for Criminology Research, University of Alberta and the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence. His talks will focus on current research and the links between violence in the family and violence in society.

Community News

Northeast

The **Fort McMurray Sexual Assault Centre** has moved into space in the Peter Pond Community School. Project Coordinator, Louise Belanger, says that overflow numbers are attending group sessions for adults molested as children. A new group for adolescent girl victims of sexual assault has begun. The Centre is organizing a symposium to take place in January. Key note speaker will be Eunadie Johnson, Thompson, Manitoba. Her address is entitled "Sexual Assault in a Northern Community." Other speakers will focus on the role of community professionals and organizations. (See page 4 for more information.)

Calgary

A service unique to Alberta has begun operating in Calgary. *The Children's Cottage*, a crisis nursery located at 1715 - 32 Street SW, opened its doors in October. It can care for six children at a time.

The idea for such a service came from the Child Abuse Team at Alberta Children's Hospital. In their view, the unavailability of relief for families unable to cope with crisis and emergencies is a pivotal factor in child abuse. Responding to this need, Parents Anonymous now provides a twenty-four hour service, offering short-term relief to highly stressed parents in crisis situations. As well, parents can be linked to the larger system of social services for concrete assistance or long-term counselling. By this means, it is hoped that the potential for abuse will be diminished and that the cycle of violence breeding violence in the family unit will be interrupted.

Northwest

The Safe Home Network in **High Level** held a workshop on family violence October 17 and 18, 1986. Speakers, agencies and films focused on medical, psychological and legal aspects, the relationship between alcohol and battering, dynamics in abusive families, and some ways of responding to the problem. The workshop was well attended with 35 to 40 persons participating each day.

* * *

A crisis line which operates from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. has been available to the people of **Peace River** since December 1985. The line was identified as a need by a group of citizens concerned about family violence. The association has a Public Awareness committee which makes presentations on issues of family violence. A resource library of literature and films has also been developed. Financial assistance has been provided by the Wild Rose Foundation.

Edmonton

Speakers have been confirmed and plans are being finalized for the Grant MacEwan Community College Conference **Family Violence: An Integrated Response**. Organizers see it "as a unique opportunity to advance knowledge and practise skills." They are particularly concerned "with the integration of efforts across agencies and disciplines; across areas of prevention and intervention; and across the areas of violent behavior, in short, across the system." The keynote address entitled "Overview of Family Violence Issues in Canada: Causation, Prevention, Treatment" will be given by Dr. Petter Jaffe, from London, Ontario. Using dramatic presentations, Catalyst Theatre will identify gaps, needs and trends within the service system. As well, more than 50 workshops will be available to participants.

South

Last June, Bob Gladish, Director of **High River FCSS** organized a community meeting to discuss the issue of family violence. Over 70 people attended from High River and the surrounding area. Following the meeting, a steering committee was established to examine how the issue could be addressed. A survey of professionals in the entire Foothills Municipal District was undertaken to determine the extent of the problem. Two sub-committees have since been set up to plan for the area. An extensive public awareness and Community Education Program is being designed by one sub-committee, while the other will generate options and ideas for responding to the problem.

Central

The **Wetaskiwin Society Against Abuse and Violence** was incorporated in March 1986. Membership consists of representatives from most agencies in **Wetaskiwin**. The initial goals of the society, which were to heighten community awareness, organize a group of volunteers to serve as advocates and to develop a team approach to ensure that the immediate needs of victims of family violence are attended to, have been achieved. Referrals to agencies have increased tremendously and valued support is being received from the local legal and medical professions.

A treatment support group for women who are victims of emotional and physical abuse is being organized and plans are underway for a treatment program for assaultive men.

A workshop focusing on approaching family violence as a community team is being planned for December.

Calendar of Events

January 22-24 Fort McMurray
Symposium: Breaking the Silence
Together: A Community Response to Sexual Assault

Contact: Fort McMurray Sexual Assault Centre
9601 Franklin Avenue
Fort McMurray T9H 2J8
Phone: 791-6708

February 14 Edmonton
Public Forum on Family Violence with Murray Straus

Contact: Office for the Prevention of Family Violence
Phone: 427-7599

February 25-27 Grande Prairie
Families in Transition

Contact: Jackie Gaboury
Odyssey House
10123 - 107 Avenue
Grande Prairie T8V 1W1
Phone: 532-2672

March 4-6 Edmonton
Family Violence:

An Integrated Response

Contact: Community Services Outreach
Grant MacEwan
Community College
7319 - 29 Avenue
Edmonton T6K 2P1
Phone: 462-5550

Still Available!!

Copies of *Breaking the pattern: How Alberta Communities Can Help Assaulted Women and Their Families.*

Contact: Office for the Prevention of Family Violence

Book Review

Child Sexual Abuse: New Theory and Research

by David Finkelhor
New York: The Free Press, 1984.

David Finkelhor has brought together in this one volume much of what is known and some of what is speculated about the sexual abuse of children, particularly within families. Reviewing the research to date, he says:

"What we know for sure is that a great deal of abuse occurs at the hands of close family members, particularly fathers and step-fathers and, once begun, usually goes on for an extended period of time. Most victims are female, between the ages of 8 to 12, who never tell anybody about their abuse at the time. The abuse can leave substantial psychological scars in the form of disturbed self-esteem and the inability to develop trust relationships.

"What is not known are clear answers to questions about the abuses, such as: Is sexual abuse sexually motivated? Is it totally deviant behavior or culturally supported? Why are some adults sexually aroused by children? Why do they then direct their impulses toward children and why do the usual inhibitors not halt the enacting of these impulses?"

Finkelhor points out the need for a multi-factor model that addresses the foregoing questions and that matches a variety of explanations of the behavior to a variety of different kinds of abuse. He offers a four-factor model of pre-conditions for the readers to consider.

The model is designed to take account of motivation, as well as addressing the question of how the abuser overcomes internal and external inhibitors and the child's resistance.

Urgently needed is more information on prevalence and incidence and identifiable risk factors. As well, the author points out the following topics are in need of research: sexual abuse of

boys, long-term effects, offenders, and the effects of intervention strategies.

The book concludes with a discussion of the implications of the current work for practitioners, noting in particular the difficulties encountered by various professionals working together.

This book would be a valuable resource to anyone interested in knowing more about this issue.

Film Review

Incest: The Hidden Crime

16mm, 16 min. Available from the Provincial Film Library

This short film portrays the true story of family members being interviewed after the mother discovered that her daughter was being sexually abused by her father. The dialogue poignantly illustrates how the daughter took responsibility for the abuse by asking her father "the question." Several experts comment on the dynamics of child sexual abuse within families and their use of family therapy as a treatment mode.

"FOCUS: FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION"

is a quarterly publication of the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence. Submissions for future issues, especially news about community activities, are welcome. To put your name on the mailing list for additional copies, contact the Office. Address all correspondence to:

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